

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 041503Z AUG 76

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8177

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T JERUSALEM 1030

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS

SUBJ: SUGGESTION US ADVOCATE PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK

REF: BEIRUT 6206, CAIRO 10048, KUWAIT 3364, AMMAN 3859, TEL AVIV
4953

1. 1. AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S ADMIRABLE EFFORT TO FIND A POSSIBLE SILVER LINING IN THE LEBANESE MORASS HAS STIMULATED INTRIGUING SERIES OF COMMENTARIES FROM AREA POSTS, NOT ALL OF WHICH WE MAY HAVE SEEN. AS SEEN FROM JERUSALEM, REACTIONS TO AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S PROPOSAL THAT THE US ADVOCATE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK UNDERLINE ONCE AGAIN ONE OF MAJOR DIFFICULTIES FACING ARAFAT OR ANY LEADER OF THE PLO - THE PROPENSITY OF ARAB STATES TO SEEK TO USE PLO FOR THEIR IMMEDIATE, CONSTANTLY SHIFTING NATIONAL OBJECTIVES RATHER THAN THINKING IN TERMS OF EVENTUAL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL.

2. GIVEN FLUIDITY OF LEBANESE SITUATION AND APPARENT UNCERTAINTY AS TO FUTURE STATUS OR EVEN SURVIVABILITY OF SOME OF MAJOR PARTICIPANTS TO PRESENT CONFLICT (INCLUDING PLO AND ARAFAT PERSONALLY), IT APPEARS PREMATURE

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TO ADOPT COURSE SUGGESTED PARA 9 BEIRUT'S 6206.

3. WHILE POLICY OBJECTIVE OF PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE SOMETHING WE MAY WISH TO SUPPORT, WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY AMMAN THAT THE GOAL WOULD PROBABLY BEST BE ACHIEVED BY HAVING IT EMERGE OR APPEAR TO EMERGE FROM NEGOTIATIONS OR CONTACTS BETWEEN THE PARTIES THEMSELVES. A US STATEMENT SUCH AS THE ONE SUGGESTED BY BEIRUT AT THIS TIME MIGHT MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR ARAFAT (OR HIS SUCCESSOR) TO ACQUIESCE IN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 OR AT LEAST ACCEPT EXISTENCE OF PRE '67 ISRAEL. SOME SUCH PLO STATEMENT WOULD SEEM TO BE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT BEFORE ISRAELI ATTITUDES TOWARD PLO (TEL AVIV'S 4953) COULD BE MODERATED.

4. AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S THOUGHT PROVOKING SUGGESTION SEVES AS A USEFUL REMINDER THAT PALESTINIAN INTERESTS WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN A POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT. WITHOUT OVERDOING IT, WE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT ARAFAT IS NECESSARILY THE PALESTINIAN LEADER TO REPRESENT PALESTINIAN INTERESTS IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS. WEST BANKERS, WHO ARE THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUP OF PALESTINIANS, STRONGLY SUPPORT THE PLO WHICH THEY SEE AS "THEIR" ORGANIZATION AND THE ONLY ARAB LEADERSHIP WHICH PUTS PALESTINIAN INTERESTS FIRST. ON THE OTHER HAND, ARAFAT PERSONALLY RECEIVES ONLY TEPID SUPPORT. THERE ARE OTHER CONCEIVABLE ALTERNATIVES WHICH, IF THEY WERE TO MATERIALIZE, WOULD FURTHER WEAKEN ARAFAT'S PRESENT STANDING IN EYES OF RANK AND FILE WEST BANKERS AND CERTAIN NOTABLES. WE SHOULD ALSO NOT FORGET THAT "TAKING ACCOUNT OF PALESTINIAN INTERESTS," INVOLVES WEST BANKERS AS WELL AS LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS ON EAST BANK, IN GAZA, AND IN SYRIA IN ADDITION TO THOSE IN LEBANON.

5. SYRIA'S REPORTED HOPE THAT PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE MIGHT COME FROM THE WEST BANK (KUWAIT 3364, PARA 5) IS UNREALISTIC AT THIS STAGE IF THIS IS IN FACT SARG'S POSITION. PRESUMABLY, SYRIANS THINK SUCH LEADERSHIP MIGHT COME FROM THE WEST BANK MAYORS WHO ARE ONLY PALESTINIANS WHO COULD CLAIM TO HAVE A CLEAR MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE. HOWEVER THESE, IN GENERAL, REJECT THE IDEA (AT LEAST SO FAR) THAT

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THEY SHOULD CONSTITUTE A LEADERSHIP SEPARATE FROM THE PLO. THEY ARGUE: ONE, THEY CANNOT PRESUME TO REPRESENT PALESTINIANS OUTSIDE THE WEST BANK, AND, TWO, THEY WILL NOT NEGOTIATE "UNDER DURESS," I.E. WHILE UNDER THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION. FURTHERMORE, ON A PRAGMATIC LEVEL, THE MAYORS TO DATE HAVE SHOWN LITTLE ABILITY TO CO-ORDINATE POLICY AND ACT TOGETHER. CONSULTATIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE, AND COOPERATION WAS

EVIDENCE IN THE WEST BANK RELIF EFFORT FOR NEEDY
IN LEBANON, BUT NO UNITED STANDS VIS-A-VIS THE ISRAELIS
(OTHER THAN ON NEW TAXES) OR AMMAN HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED.
MOST ARE NOT STRONG LEADERS, AND ARE RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED,
AND PROVINCIAL I OUTLOOK.

6. UNFORTUNATELY, THE PRESENT ANARCHY AND FIGHTING
IN LEBANON, COUPLED WITH ARAB DISARRAY, MAKE IT
DIFFICULT TO ADDRESS LONGER RANGE OBJECTIVIES MEANINGFULLY.

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